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Michel François

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Exhibition: 12.10.-21.12.2018

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Galerie Mezzanin is delighted to announce a solo exhibition of the Belgian artist Michel François.

François is an interdisciplinary artist, known for working cross-media, in that often transcending genre. Though he claims no signature style, he idiosyncratically generates interconnections, tensions and resonances between his works, thereby creating a place for dialogue and exchange not only amongst visitors and objects, but also within the exhibited works themselves.

Similar to the Arte Povera artists, François uses great economy of means to transform seemingly usual and mundane objects and materials, into carriers of meaning.

Infini, a simple rope in the shape of an eight or the infinity symbol, showcases how the status of an object can be modified by the effect of contextualization.

The play with precious and cheap materials, as can be seen in *Peanuts stick*, is, however, not the only antagonism François employs in his works: In *Débordement*, a sponge soaked with ink deposited on a plaster sphere, the stark contrast in color also evokes multiple exegeses.

The centre piece of this exhibition, *A souffles perdus*, a string with handblown glass balloons in red and black, is not only a very poetic homage to sculpture, but also an evocation of François' understanding of ephemera: "the materials that I use replace the absent courses, they are presences for absences (echoes the condition of the living)." ¹

The only photograph in this exhibition, *Hétérophoto*, derives its title from "heterotopia" (Greek: hetero= different/other, topos=place), a concept elaborated by the French philosopher Michel Foucault. It describes a certain place that is surrounded by a sense of otherness and alternated reality (e.g. ships, prisons, cemeteries). Being neither a dys-, nor a utopia, the term heterotopia characterizes places which function as microcosms in themselves, "juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible." ²

François constructs a puzzle of contrasting colors, illusions, materials, shadows and light into a complex whole that serves as both a parable of what sculpture is capable of being and an enigmatic representation of his oeuvre.

Depending on one's perspective and point of view, the interpretation can be a narrow tightrope walk that is often on the verge of instability and shapeshifting thanks to the ambiguous and janus-faced character of his pieces. This richness in meaning, after all, is what makes it possible to visit and revisit his exhibitions, each time taking home a new revelation.

¹ Paris-art.fr, 5 juillet 2012, <http://www.paris-art.com/interview-artiste/michel-francois/francois-michel/492.html>

² Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Heterotopias and Utopias," ("Des Espaces Autres," March 1967), translated from the French by Jay Miskowicz, *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité*, October 1984

Michel François (b.1956, Saint-Trond, Belgium) lives and works in Brussels. Recent solo exhibitions include: Nineteen thousand posters. 1994-2016, Frac île-de-France, le château, Rantilly, France (2016); Pieces of Evidence, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK (2014); Pièces à conviction, CRAC Languedoc-Roussillon, Sète, France (2012); Michel François. Le Trait commun, Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, France (2012); 45.000 affiches. 1994-2011, MAC's, Site du Grand Hornu, Belgium (2011); Plans d'évasion, IAC, Villeurbanne, France (2010); Plans d'évasion, SMAK, Ghent, Belgium (2009) and Hespérides I, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne, Switzerland (2009). His work has also been included in numerous group exhibitions such as Documenta IX (1992), the São Paulo Biennial XXII (1994), the 48th Venice Biennial (1999) and Sonsbeek 2008. Together with Ann Veronica Janssens he contributed to The Song (2009) by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker. Other collaborations with De Keersmaeker include En Attendant (2010) and Partita 2 (2013).